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PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1992-1993

QUESTIONS RELATING TO INFORMATION

Programme budget implications of draft resolution B, entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities"

Statement submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly

1. At its 23rd meeting, on 20 November 1992, the Special Political Committee adopted draft resolution A/SPC/47/L.10 (in its reissued form) without a vote. A statement of programme budget implications was before the Committee in document A/SPC/47/L.13.

A. Request contained in the draft resolution

2. Under the terms of operative paragraphs 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 15 and 16 of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would:

A. Call upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, and in this regard should ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Continues to disseminate information about the activities of the United Nations in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies in accordance with the United Nations medium-term plan, the programme budget and their relevant revisions, pertaining, inter alia to:

(i) International peace and security;

(ii) Disarmament;

(iii) Peace-keeping operations and peacemaking;

(iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the light of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism;

(v) The promotion and protection of human rights and in that context the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights;

(vi) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

(vii) The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;

(viii) The promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(ix) Problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic cooperation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

(x) The least developed countries;

(xi) The environment and development;

(xii) The elimination of foreign occupation;

(xiii) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms in line with General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

(xiv) International efforts against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking;

(xv) Crime prevention and criminal justice;

(xvi) Support for the New Agenda of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and for the tremendous efforts of the African countries aimed at recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(xvii) International efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa and, where necessary, the role of the United Nations in this context;

(xviii) United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, in particular, also including current developments in that region and the ongoing peace process;

(b) Provides the necessary level of information support for the activities of the United Nations in situations requiring immediate and special response;

(c) Continues its efforts at promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and at strengthening the positive image of the system as a whole;

(d) Continues its efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its mandated publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations, Development Forum and Africa Recovery and continues to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all the material that it produces, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur;

(e) Submits a report on continuous and major publications to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session, providing the following details:

(i) The list of publications and their circulation figures;

(ii) Their cost;

(iii) The original language versions and the languages into which the publications were translated;

(iv) Target audiences, including, where possible, the intended end-use of the specific products;

(f) Continues its briefings, assistance and orientation programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(g) Provides, on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) about new forms of cooperation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries;

(h) Continues its policies of cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations system, and in particular with UNESCO;

(i) Continues its policies of cooperation with the news agencies in and of the developing countries, in particular the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries;

B. Request the Secretary-General, in the light of the increasing demands now placed on the Department of Public Information in relation to media coverage of United Nations activities, to provide at the fifteenth session of the Committee on Information an assessment regarding:

(a) Any measures considered appropriate to ensure that the working facilities provided for the media are fully adequate to meet present and future needs and, in this context, to consult with the Bureau of the Committee, spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, in relation to the implementation of any significant measures in this regard;

(b) The consideration of a greater framework of coordination within the Department of Public Information in relation to the provision of facilities and services for the media, such as the work of the Executive Media Service and the provision of accreditation services;

C. Request, in this context, the Secretary-General to direct the Publications Board to develop criteria and review all publications and proposals for publications to ensure, inter alia, that each publication fulfils an identifiable mandate and need, is timely, does not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system, and is cost-effective, and that before the publication is printed, it satisfies the criteria on the basis of which it was authorized, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information;

D. Call upon the Secretary-General to submit a detailed and comprehensive report on his plan of integrating United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, while maintaining the functional autonomy of the United Nations information centres and emphasizing that they should be fully operational, as provided for in relevant resolutions, to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session for its consideration of the different options available in this regard. In this context, consultations should take place on this matter through the informal mechanism composed of the Bureau of the Committee on Information and the spokespersons of regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, as was established in paragraph 1 (s) of General Assembly resolution 46/73 of 11 December 1991;

E. Call upon the Secretary-General to study ways and means of redressing differences in the allocation of resources, in particular the differences of support, in relation to the financing of United Nations information centres in various countries and to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

F. Request the Secretary-General to finalize, in consultation with the Polish authorities, arrangements for a United Nations information component in Warsaw;

G. Call upon the Secretary-General to implement fully its recommendations contained in resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991, including paragraphs 1 (l) and (m), regarding the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Sana'a, Yemen, as well as the reactivation of the United Nations information centre in Tehran and the enhancing of the information centres in Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura;

H. Call upon the Secretary-General, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, to make every effort as a matter of particular urgency to create conditions and to make them more conducive to achieving parity by appropriate utilization of existing equipment in the press coverage of meetings in English and French;

I. Decide, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, on the publication in the Arabic and Spanish languages, after each of its annual sessions, of the press release containing the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the results of the voting through reallocation of resources from the budget of the Department of Public Information.

B. Activities by which the request would be implemented

3. Should the draft resolution be adopted by the General Assembly, the Secretary-General would:

(a) Ensure that the Department of Public Information continues to disseminate information about the activities of the United Nations in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies in accordance with the medium-term plan and the programme budget;

(b) Provide an assessment to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session on the working facilities provided to the media;

(c) Submit a report to the fifteenth session of the Committee on Information on the plan for integrating United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices;

(d) Study ways and means for redressing imbalances in the allocation of resources between information centres around the world;

(e) Continue consultations with the Government of Poland with a view to establishing a United Nations component in Warsaw;

(f) Take appropriate measures to implement General Assembly resolution 46/73;

(g) Commence, on a phased basis, provision in conference rooms at Headquarters of the necessary furniture and equipment with a view to achieving parity in the press coverage of meetings in English and French;

(h) Publish the press release, in the Arabic and Spanish languages, of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, including the results of the voting.

4. With respect to the request contained in subparagraph 2.A(d) above, the Department of Public Information would continue its efforts to ensure timely production and editorial independence of its mandated publications. With regard to Development Forum, however, the financial situation has finally deteriorated to the critical point where maintaining the status quo ante is no longer possible. In spite of stringent economy measures, the publication has continued to operate in deficit ($72,700 in 1992 and $324,100 in 1991), and at current levels of income and expenditure, cash reserves would be completely depleted in 1993. Accordingly, as indicated in the report on questions relating to information (A/47/462 and Corr.1) and as conveyed to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in view of its critical financial situation the Secretary-General has no option but to cease the production of the general edition by 31 December 1992. So long as it continues to be financially viable, however, production of the business edition will continue.

C. Additional requirements at full cost

5. The activities mentioned in paragraphs 2.A and 2.G above reflect the activities originally programmed under section 31 of the 1992-1993 programme budget, and no additional resources would be required for their implementation.

6. With regard to the reports and assessments referred to in paragraphs 2.B, 2.D and 2.E above, it is anticipated that no additional appropriations would be required for their production, as they relate to the regular programme of activities of the Programme Evaluation and Communications Research Unit of the Department of Public Information.

7. With regard to the request referred to in paragraph 2.F above, the Department of Public Information will continue its consultations with the Government of Poland, in particular regarding the availability of suitable rent-free premises. The extent of practical support to be provided by the Government of Poland will be taken into account in the preparation of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.

8. With respect to the request contained in subparagraph 2.H above regarding the equal provision of English and French press coverage in the conference rooms, it is the intention of the Secretary-General to provide the necessary equipment in the various conference rooms in a phased manner, as follows:

(a) The necessary furniture and equipment has already been installed in 1992 in Conference Rooms 1 and 3;

(b) The necessary furniture and equipment will be installed in the Trusteeship Council Chamber in 1993;

(c) Specific proposals for furniture and equipment for the Economic and Social Council Chamber and the General Assembly Hall will be made in the relevant sections of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.

9. With respect to the request referred to in paragraph 2.I above, this would involve additional translation, typing and printing costs.

10. On a full-cost basis, the additional requirements arising from the requests referred to in paragraphs 2.H and 2.I above are estimated at $107,900, as follows:

(a) Equipment for French press officers

Full provision is only made for coverage in English in the conference rooms at Headquarters. Equal provision for coverage in French would in a first phase entail the following additional costs in 1992-1993:

Section		$
41	Furniture (15 tables)	12 000
41	Wiring	1 500
41	Installation	1 000
31	Computer terminals (10 PCs)	20 000
	Subtotal (a)	34 500

(b) Press release on the General Assembly resolutions in Arabic and Spanish

The estimated requirements at full cost for producing the Arabic and Spanish versions of the compendium, on the same basis as the French version, would be as follows:

Section		$
31	Translation costs	28 000
31	Typing	30 400
41	Printing	15 000
	Subtotal (b)	73 400
	Total, (a) and (b)	107 900

D. Potential for absorption

11. Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, it is anticipated that the estimated cost in 1993 of phased measures to achieve parity in the press coverage of meetings in English and French would be absorbed from existing appropriations under sections 31 ($20,000) and 33, now proposed for transfer to section 41 ($14,500), of the programme budget for the biennium 1992-1993.

12. In order to produce the compendium of press releases containing the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly in the Arabic and Spanish languages as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, the Department of Public Information would redeploy regular budget funds earmarked for the organization of the annual United Nations Day Concert for that year. (The United Nations Day Concert is normally financed from a mix of regular budget and extrabudgetary funds.) The Department of Public Information would instead finance the 1993 Concert from available and expected extrabudgetary credits in the United Nations Day Concert Trust Fund Account. Requirements for producing the Arabic and Spanish language versions of the compendium in 1994-1995 would be reflected in the context of the proposed programme budget for that biennium.